TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR

"A REVIEW OF SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN ONTARIO"

I. BACKGROUND — THE NEED FOR REVIEW

There are a number of compelling reasons to undertake a comprehensive review of social assistance and related programs in Ontario at this time.

Ontario's two major pieces of income maintenance legislation have existed virtually unchanged for 20 years. The General Welfare Assistance Act was proclaimed in 1958 and the Family Benefits Act in 1967.

Under these two programs, the Province now spends almost $1.5 billion each year on social assistance to some 480,000 men, women and children. Clients include sole support parents, employable persons, and those who are physically or mentally disabled or permanently unemployable. Millions more is spent on other programs designed to alleviate the effects of poverty and to help people improve their economic situations.

Despite ongoing increases in expenditures, there is increasing concern that the system is in need of significant improvement, or indeed, that it is failing to meet its basic objectives. Even though recent rate increases have now fully "caught up" to inflation, there appears to be more demand than ever for emergency meals and shelter services. Clients also are having difficulty finding affordable housing, and indeed, many spend a major portion of their allowances on rent.

In addition, the ongoing growth in the total social assistance caseload in the face of declining unemployment is a particularly disturbing phenomenon. People on short term General Welfare are staying on assistance for longer time periods than ever before. Social assistance legislation was designed for a different period, a time when women stayed home, the great majority of families had two parents, and fathers were typically the sole wage earners in the family. Clearly, much has changed.

These overall trends are receiving increasing public attention, as are a number of other factors:

- a growing awareness of the potential impact of the Charter in terms of government's ability to define who should receive benefits (e.g., how to treat a single parent on social assistance who establishes a common-law relationship, but there is no legal onus of support on the new spouse).

- increasing involvement of "rights" movements, to ensure clients receive due process of law;

- a growing awareness of the problems of the "working poor" and the inequities between those working full time at low wages and those who are on social assistance (Ontario is the last province to make full provisions for assistance for those earning less than they would have received in welfare);

- a perception that social welfare agencies are not well-coordinated to help clients with multiple needs;

- an apparent continuation of the traditional approach of offering a "hand-out", not a "hand up".

These concerns are reinforced by an examination of Ontario's social assistance legislation, which has not been amended in many years and does not reflect:

- changing client characteristics;
- changing client needs;
- changing delivery modes and technologies.

II PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

The Ontario Cabinet has given approval for a public review of social assistance and related programs under the auspices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to examine:

- what the guiding principles and objectives of social assistance and related programs should be

- to what extent the present system is meeting these objectives;

- what overall strategies for change the Province should adopt

- what parameters the Province should accept as it moves to change its legislation

It is hoped that the review will lay the groundwork for the development of new legislation which is more appropriate and responsive to current and future needs.

III. SCOPE OF THE REVIEW

Review Committee members will be asked to produce a report which provides the Province with an overall set of principles and a framework for ensuring that social assistance programs are brought into line with those principles.

Within the context of the Cabinet decision, the review is primarily meant to address social assistance programs which are within the mandate and the jurisdiction of the Government of Ontario. The Committee, however, may examine programs at other levels of government and make recommendations as to the posture the Ontario Government may wish to adopt in future discussions with federal and municipal counterparts.

In order to fulfill its mandate, the Review Committee will have to address a number of additional questions and make general observations and conclusions. Examples of the major subsidiary questions are as follows:

- is there sufficient direct support (cash assistance and fringe benefits) being provided to those already on assistance;

- is the assistance available to all who should receive it (issues related to the working poor, as well as the Charter);

- is assistance being provided in a fair and responsive manner;

- what role are emergency services (food, hostels) playing; what role should they be playing;

- what are the impacts of the Province's overall housing policies on social assistance recipients and the working poor and how can/should social assistance mechanisms be used to complement overall housing objectives;

- are there sufficient and appropriate social support services available (e.g., counselling, referral);

- is there enough emphasis on provisions designed to help clients move towards economic independence;

- what factors impede the attainment of the articulated objectives and principles of social assistance

- which levels of government should pay for social assistance; which levels should deliver it.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A Review Committee of 12 individuals has been named to undertake the task.

The Committee will be expected to:

- gather information on existing programs;

- study available literature;

- analyze and research initiatives currently underway within the Ontario Government, federal and municipal levels of government, in other provinces, and possibly other countries.

- undertake public consultation

- have background papers written

- analyze alternative approaches and their implications

- prepare a report and make recommendations.

V. TIME FRAME

The Social Assistance Review Committee will begin its work in July 1986 and complete the final report by the late spring of 1987.

VI. REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The members of the Committee reflect perspectives of a number of interested groups and constituencies, including recipient and grass roots advocacy groups, social service agencies, Native groups, churches, labour, business, and Francophone and multicultural sectors. As well representation from a reasonable range of geographic sections of the Province has been established.

The Committee will also be assisted in its work by a number of umbrella organizations and other groups, consultants and representatives of other key constituencies.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW

CONSULTATION PACKAGE

Contents:

1. Consultation Guide
2. Schedule of Public Hearings
3. Statistical Package

September 1986

THE ONTARIO SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW

A Guide to Consultation

September 1986

On July 7, 1986, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Honourable John Sweeney, initiated a public review of Ontario's social assistance system. A citizens' committee, independent of the government, will conduct the review and report its findings in mid 1987. The Review Committee wants input from the public and this guide has been prepared to provide basic information for individuals or groups who would like to make their views known.

WHY IS A REVIEW NECESSARY?

Ontario's two major pieces of income maintenance legislation have existed virtually unchanged for 20 years. The General Welfare Assistance Act was passed in 1958 and the Family Benefits Act in 1967.

Despite ongoing increases in expenditures, there is a growing belief that the social assistance system is in need of significant improvement and concern that it may be failing to meet its basic objectives. Even though recent rate increases have caught up to inflation, there appears to be more demand than ever for emergency food and shelter services. A growing number of social assistance recipients are having difficulty finding affordable housing and many already spend a major portion of their allowances on rent.

In addition, people are staying on assistance for longer periods of time than ever before. And, increases in the number of recipients who are employable and increases in the total caseload in spite of declining unemployment are especially disturbing phenomena.

Existing legislation and programs were designed for a different era. It was a time when most women stayed at home, the great majority of families had two parents and fathers were the sole wage earners in the family.

All of these factors and many others suggest that the time is ripe for a thorough review of the social assistance system.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THE REVIEW?

The review will encompass the programs administered under the auspices of the General Welfare Assistance Act and the Family Benefits Act. These programs constitute the provincial social assistance system which is sometimes referred to as "welfare", "family benefits" or "mother's allowance". While social assistance provides the major focus, the review will consider the impact of policies and programs of other ministries and levels of government.

The Review Committee has been asked to make recommendations to provide the Province with an overall set of principles that should govern the whole social assistance system and a framework for ensuring that current programs are brought into line with those principles. Changing client characteristics and needs as well as changing delivery modes and technologies must be taken into consideration as part of this process. In keeping with this mandate, the Review Committee will concentrate on the following questions:

- what are the fundamental principles on which social assistance programs should be based?

- to what extent is the system falling short of realizing these principles?

- what overall strategies for change should the Province adopt?

The Review Committee will also consider a variety of supplementary questions which may include the following:

- o is sufficient direct support being provided to those already receiving social assistance?
- o are there others who need but do not receive assistance?
- o is the cost of the system unreasonable?
- o what is the role of emergency services like food banks and hostels?
- o are there adequate supports provided for those on assistance who want to move into the labour force?
- o to what extent are social assistance programs being misused or abused?
- o what are the effects of current housing policies and programs on social assistance recipients?

This list is not intended to be exhaustive but provides a sample of some of the questions the Review Committee expects to address.

WHAT IS THE TIME FRAME FOR THE REVIEW?

The Committee members and staff began work in August 1986. Public hearings and consultation will take place throughout the fall and winter. It is expected that a final report will be prepared in the spring and presented to the government by mid 1987.

WHO IS ON THE REVIEW COMMITTEE?

Given the importance and complexity of a thorough review of the social assistance system, the provincial government has sought the help of a 12 member independent Review Committee. Committee members were appointed by the Minister of Community and Social Services and have been drawn from all regions of the province. Included are representatives of churches, self-help advocacy groups, labour and business organizations, Native groups, social service agencies, francophone and other multicultural groups and municipalities. Some committee members are themselves former social assistance recipients.

The Review Committee will be assisted by a small staff and will gather information on current programs, conduct new research, identify innovative strategies used in other provinces or countries and will evaluate the feasibility of alternative approaches.

HOW WILL THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATE IN THE REVIEW?

The members of the Review Committee not only want to but also need to hear the views of the public about changes to the social assistance system. To that end, public hearings will be held in a number of communities across the province. Locations for the hearings were selected to allow input from all regions of the province and from smaller communities as well as large urban centres.

A schedule of dates and locations for the public hearings is appended. Individuals and groups who want to appear at the public hearings should make their requests known to the Committee so that we can accommodate as many as possible. Every effort will be made to meet the special needs of people wishing to appear before the Committee.

Committee members will want to know your opinion about the principles that should govern social assistance programs. They will need to hear about problems that currently exist. Equally important, they want your views on the kinds of specific changes you think are necessary as well as new and innovative approaches that can be taken to build a new system.

Input to the Committee can take a variety of forms. While it is expected that formal briefs will typify most of the submissions, letters, telephone calls or verbal presentations at public hearings are also acceptable. There is no standard format for written submissions.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Written briefs, letters or telephone calls should be directed to the Committee at the address listed below. Requests to appear at the public hearings should be submitted as soon as possible. If you have questions or need more information, contact any of the staff members at:

The Social Assistance Review Committee
10th Floor, 2195 Yonge Street
Toronto, Ontario M4S 2B2
(416) 963-3741

Staff

Debbie Oakley	Project Manager
Trinela Cane	Co-ordinator, Consultation
Patrick Johnston	Senior Advisor - Research and Policy Analysis
John Stapleton	Senior Advisor - Ministry Policy and Programs

SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

CITY/TOWN	DATE	TIME
Kenora	October 27	9:am-9:pm
Peterborough	October 29	9:am-9:pm
Sudbury	November 4	9:am-9:pm
Windsor	November 6	9:am-9:pm
Ottawa	November 12	9:am-9:pm
	November 13	9:am-9:pm
Cambridge	November 19	9:am-9:pm
Timmins	November 20	9:am-9:pm
Toronto	November 24	9:am-9:pm
	November 26	9:am-9:pm
	November 27	9:am-9:pm
Kingston	December 2	9:am-9:pm
Sault Ste Marie	December 4	9:am-9:pm
Thunder Bay	December 10	9:am-9:pm
Hamilton	December 12	9:am-9:pm.
Owen Sound	January 7	9:am-9:pm
London	January 9	9:am-9:pm

*Should you require specific information about a Hearing, or its specific location, or if you wish to speak at one of the Hearings, please contact:

Consultation Staff
Social Assistance Review
2195 Yonge Street
10th Floor
Toronto, Ontario
M4S 2B2
(416) 963-3741

BACKGROUND STATISTICAL INFORMATION

ON

FAMILY BENEFITS ALLOWANCE

AND

GENERAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE

FAMILY BENEFITS: 1985/86

Monthly average numbers:

- Recipients: (excluding WIN)	151,581
- Dependents:	135,397
- Total # of Persons:	286,978
- % of Provincial Population:	3.2%
- Costs 1984/85 (Actuals):	$814.2 M
- Costs 1985/86 (Actuals):	$896.5 M
- Average Case Costs (1985/86):	$485.00

- Sample Rates as of Sept.'86 (Maxima):

- Mother w/1 child:	$782.
- Mother w/2 children:	$892.
- Mother w/3 children:	$992.
- Single Disabled:	$576.
- Family of Four (one spouse disabled):	$1,109.

- Relative Caseload Growth 85/86---84/85:

- Disabled:	6.4%
- Sole support parents:	2.8%
- Others: (includes WIN)	1.5%

- Significant Changes in Last Five Years:

	Rate Increases*	Expenditure Growth
1981/82	8% (FBA only Oct'81)	15.5%
1982/83	5%	15.8%
1983/84	5%	16.5%
1984/85	4.5% (Jan.85)	13.9%
1985/86	4% (Jan.86)	10.1%

Figures reflect across-the-board increase in basic allowances but do not include increases to shelter subsidies and other selective improvements (eg. special increases in child's portion of basic allowance.)

No major changes in eligibility criteria have occurred since 1982 when single fathers and disabled wives were added as benefit categories.

GENERAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE: 1985/86

Monthly average numbers:

- Recipients: 107,000
- Dependents: 80,000
- Total # of Persons: 187,000
- % of Provincial Population: 2.1%
- Costs 1984/85 (Actuals): $397.9M
- Costs 1985/86 (Actuals): $431.4M
- Average Case Costs: (includes Municipal share) $419.00
- Sample Rates as of Sept.'86 (Maxima):
  - Single Employable: $419.
  - Single Unemployable: $426.
  - Couple: $749.
  - Couple + 1 child: $848.
  - Couple + 2 children: $936.
  - Minimum Wage: * $650.

  less payroll deductions and work expenses

  *(will be $706 effective Oct.'86)
- Relative Caseload Growth

	1984/85	1985/86	%
- Employables	59,300	55,700	-6.1
- Unemployables	34,300	34,200	-0.3
- Female Heads of Family	16,800	16,800	0

- Significant Changes in Last Five Years:

	Rate Increases*	Expenditure Growth over prior year
1981/82	-	12.6%
1982/83	5%	36.3%
1983/84	5%	20.0%
1984/85	4.5%	5.4%
1985/86	4%	8.4%

Figures reflect across-the-board increase in basic allowances but do not include increases to shelter subsidies and other selective improvements. (eg. special $50 increase for 2 adult families)

- other changes include:

  - extension of eligibility to all recipients wishing to undertake training or schooling (July 1984)

  - removal of sex discrimination so that either sex can be head of household (November 1984)

SELECTED CASE EXAMPLES - MAXIMUM AND MINIMUM ALLOWANCES

Monthly Allowances — Sept. 1986 $

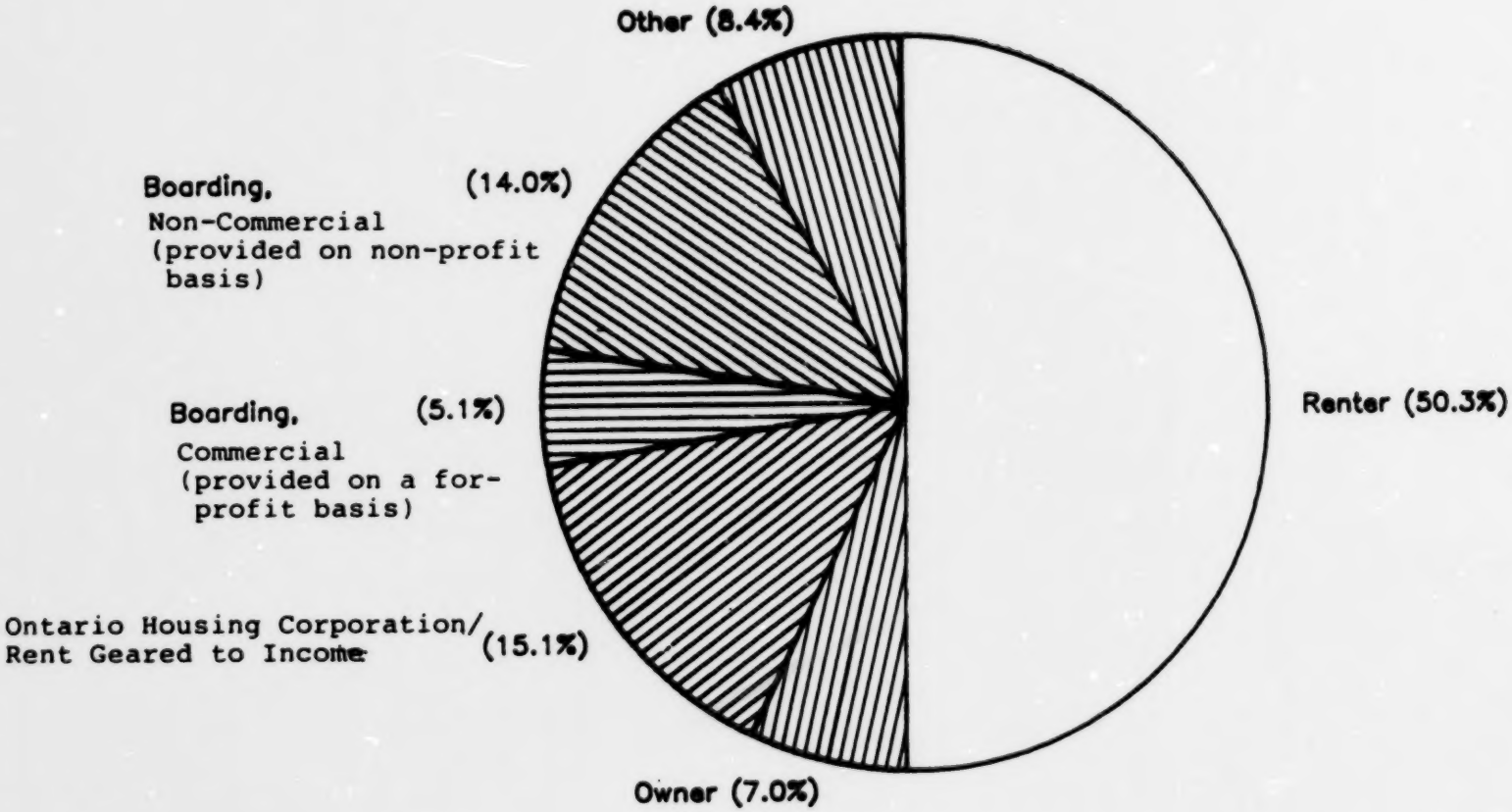
Family Benefits	Maximum	Minimum
Single Disabled Person	576	398
Disabled Person with spouse	899	633
Single Parent with 1 Child	782	509
Single Parent with 2 Children	892	586
Single Parent with 3 Children	992	660
General Welfare Assistance		
Single Employable Person	419	253
Couple	749	472
Couple with 2 Children	936	608

*Maximums include the highest possible shelter subsidy and assume home heating costs are included in rent. All children are assumed to be age 10-15.

Minimums reflect boarding rates in the non-commercial sector, but do assume some shelter costs.

TYPE OF ACCOMMODATION IN MARCH 1986

FOR 268,000 FBA/GWA CASES (Incl. WIN)



REASON FOR RECEIVING SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

261,000 GWA AND FBA CASES COMBINED

1985/86